

Chapter 5 – Funding Your Program

Safe Routes to School programs range in both scope and funding sources. Many are small, entirely volunteer efforts, while others have become well-established with consistent and sustainable funding. As you begin your local program, consider what can be done with very limited and local funding, but keep your eye on opportunities from a wide range of funding sources.

Funds are generally divided into two categories: infrastructure and non-infrastructure. Infrastructure monies pay for the “engineering” improvements identified in your plan, such as sidewalks, bicycle facilities, crosswalks, traffic signals, and trails. Typically these funds come from government sources. Non-infrastructure funds cover the “education,” “enforcement,” and “encouragement” portions of your plan. They may also cover the salary of a coordinator or other personnel. Non-infrastructure funds may come from government sources as well as a range of grants, donations and fund-raising efforts.



Federal Funding

Safe Routes to School Program funds

In 2005, a new federal law established the federal Safe Routes to School Program. The law is called “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A



Legacy for Users Act” (SAFETEA-LU). The Safe Routes to School Program was initially funded at \$612 million over five years (FY 2005-2009), with funds dispersed to states in proportion to the number of elementary and middle school students enrolled in the state. In Georgia, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) administers the funds. The funds are largely to assist communities across the state to start Safe Routes to School programs. It is estimated that Georgia will receive a total of \$16 million over 5 years (FY05-FY09); approximately 80% of that will be dedicated to infrastructure and approximately 20% will fund non-infrastructure activities. Only governments and school districts can apply for the infrastructure funds. A Georgia SRTS Resource Center will provide non-infrastructure programs to all interested K-8 schools in the state. The GDOT Safe Routes to School Program website, <http://www.dot.ga.gov/localgovernment/fundingprograms/SRTS>, provides detailed information on the application process for federal SRTS funds in Georgia. Under the federal Safe Routes to School program, projects will not require that the local community provide matching funds. However, because the funds are limited, competitive, and geared toward start-up, communities are encouraged to find additional sources of funding to fully implement Safe Routes to School programs on an on-going basis.



Local governments can seek federal funds for assistance with the installation of bike lanes.

Other Federal Infrastructure & Non-Infrastructure funds

The federal government provides funding to states for transportation infrastructure projects, including bicycle and pedestrian improvements, under a variety of categories. Local governments develop transportation plans and apply for the federal funds through their Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), or, in non-metropolitan areas, through the Georgia Department of Transportation. Local governments must provide a 20% match to the federal funds. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities may also be included as part of a larger road construction project. All transportation projects selected for funding are included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which is updated annually. See the Georgia Department of Transportation's STIP website for more information about this process: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/informationcenter/programs/transportation/Pages/stip.aspx>.

Some federal funds are available through a competitive application process. Safe Routes to School programs can work with their local

government to incorporate long-range "engineering" items from the SRTS Plan into the local application for federal transportation funds. For example, a local government might apply for federal "Transportation Enhancement" funds to build a new bike lane on a street leading to a school. These funds are not true grants - a local government must provide 20% matching funds, and they must pay for total expenses upfront and submit invoices for reimbursement from the Georgia Department of Transportation. More about Transportation Enhancement funds can be found at <http://www.dot.ga.gov/localgovernment/fundingprograms/TransportationEnhancement>. A summary of many of the federal and state transportation funding sources can be viewed on the Federal Highway Administration's web site at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/factsheets/hov.htm>. Additional information on bicycle and pedestrian funding sources in Georgia can be found at <http://www.dot.ga.gov/travelingingeorgia/bikepedestrian>.

Safe Routes to School programs may also apply for federal Safety funds (also known as Section 402 or Section 157) from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, <http://www.gohs.state.ga.us>. These funds are used for education, enforcement, and public awareness activities that promote safety. Non-profit organizations, school districts and local governments may apply.

Local Public Funding

Funding for Safe Routes to School can also come through local governments. Many have instituted a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) that can be used for transportation projects. Generally, these funds address infrastructure needs, but in some areas, counties and cities also support more comprehensive efforts. The Arlington County Safe Routes to School program in Virginia, for example, provides walking and

biking route maps and safety education materials for parents of children enrolled in public schools, county police conduct safety education training for students and closely monitor targeted schools to enforce a "zero tolerance" traffic violation program, and the county dedicated \$1 million to infrastructure improvements. School systems can also sponsor Safe Routes to School programs with their own funds. For example, one school system in Georgia has incorporated Safe Routes to School coordinator duties into one of its existing administrative staff positions.

Other Public Funding

There may be a variety of other sources of public funding unique to your area that can fund particular aspects of a Safe Routes to School Program. With Georgia's statewide Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan in place, a local health department may seek funds dedicated toward prevention and control of obesity. One county board of health in Georgia has funded a Safe Routes to School program as part of a "Steps to a HealthierUS" cooperative agreement through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The program is part of a broader health initiative for the prevention of chronic disease, such as diabetes, obesity, and asthma targeted to a specific geographic area of the county.

A local college or university may have research money to conduct a study on physical activity in children, or your local police department may have public safety funds directed toward traffic safety. You may need to be a bit of a "sleuth," but there are many sources of funds available that can be channeled toward Safe Routes to School efforts.

Keep in mind, too, that infrastructure projects can be funded in a variety of ways. Sometimes projects don't require special,



At B.B. Harris Elementary, striping for one crosswalk across the school driveway was funded by the school system; the other crosswalk was funded by the county.

dedicated monies; instead, a bicycle or pedestrian accommodation might be "piggy-backed" onto other existing road projects. Or an item on your plan may be taken care of as routine maintenance by the local transportation department; it may only take a specific request. See page 7-2 for a Georgia case study.

Grants

Private foundations and grant-making institutions can be excellent sources for non-profits and school systems to find funding for non-infrastructure activities. There is currently a great deal of interest among some grant-makers to fund programs related to school health and physical activity. Safe Routes to School can also fall under the categories of transportation, safety, environment, and community-building.

The Foundation Center, <http://foundationcenter.org/findfunders/>, is one source of information on available grant funding sources. The Center's Atlanta office focuses on grant-makers that fund programs in the southeast. In addition, local school systems, principals, and teachers often receive information about small grant opportunities that focus on schools.

Health, safety, transportation, and environmental organizations may also be aware of funding that might serve the needs of a Safe Routes to School program.

Activity-Specific Funding

Local sources may provide limited funding for projects with specific goals. The PTA, for example, might fund a Walk and Roll to School Day event, a Frequent Walker and Bike-Rider Program, or a minor infrastructure improvement such as a sign or a bike rack. A local safety group, police department, or bicycle organization might help fund pedestrian or bicycle safety classes. Sometimes neighborhood civic associations provide small grants for specific activities, and even an interested individual might make a donation earmarked for a particular project. You might also approach local businesses or business associations for sponsorship of an event, promotional materials, such as T-shirts, or a minor infrastructure item. Bike shops and recreation equipment stores are often excellent sources of specific support.

Fund-raising Events

School-based groups, such as the PTA, are often “experts” at fund-raising events: bake sales, spaghetti suppers, silent auctions, “hat days,” and T-shirt sales are among the many techniques in the fund-raising “tool-kit.” You may want to partner with the PTA on one of their usual events and ask that a portion of the proceeds go to Safe Routes to School. You might also consider holding separate events that reinforce the Safe Routes to School concepts, such as a walk-athon or a fundraising bike ride.

There may also be an opportunity to “piggy-back” on another fund-raiser event. For instance, if there is a diabetes walkathon, or a charity bike ride, or even the Tour de Georgia coming through your community, you



The Mason Elementary school community celebrated the installation of their new bike racks with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

How Mason Elementary Got Their Bike Racks

When lots of students began to bicycle to Mason Elementary in Duluth, GA, the Safe Routes to School Team identified the need for six bike racks. They only had funds for one. So the Team sought other sources

- a local bike shop, delighted to have more families in the area biking, donated one rack;
- a bicycle dealers association, also delighted by opportunities to increase bicycling, donated another;
- a local dentist, and avid cyclist, donated another;
- the PTA donated half a rack and a rack and a half was paid for through a “Hat Day” fundraiser in which students paid \$1 for the privilege of wearing a hat in school for the day.

The school system paid for installation of the racks. And now, Mason Elementary has six “state of the art” bike racks.



Selling "Walk and Roll to School - It's Cool!" T-shirts as a fundraiser.

may be able to have some of the proceeds donated to your Safe Routes to School Program, or at least be allowed to set up a table and solicit for donations.

In-Kind Support

In-kind support is of great value to Safe Routes to School programs; while in-kind donations provide needed goods and services, the interaction also helps to build and nurture important community relationships. Schools in Georgia have community business partners who commit to supporting school efforts, so they are excellent resources to tap. (Be sure, however, to consult with school staff before contacting them! Schools have many needs and must prioritize their requests.) Business partners or other local businesses may be able to provide refreshments for events, printing services, prizes for contests and events, equipment for safety classes, or other valuable items that can defray your program's expenses.

Volunteer support can also be of great help to your Safe Routes to School efforts. Volunteers from the PTA, health organizations, a biking or walking club, a local high school, or even a local business might assist with Walking School Buses or Bike Trains. (Be



A kids mountain bike donated by a local bike shop serves as a prize.

sure to check with the principal regarding procedures for interacting directly with students.) Volunteers can also help staff events, make posters, conduct surveys, or fix bikes. Student intern programs through universities are also excellent sources of assistance. A civic association or a group of individuals with an understanding of local government systems might be enlisted to help bring attention to needed traffic enforcement or infrastructure improvements around a school. And, of course, parents and students can do the "footwork" on many of the activities involved in Safe Routes to School. All of this volunteer participation can get the work done while deepening community involvement in the program.



Volunteers fix up a fleet of used bikes for a bike class. A local sports store donated tire tubes and other parts.